

News Release

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Magombera Forest is protected as a new Nature Forest Reserve

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania has announced the establishment of the Magombera Nature Forest Reserve, a 26 km² globally unique forest ecosystem in Kilombero District, on the edge of the Selous Game Reserve.

Since the 1970s, there have been proposals to protect Magombera Forest due to its extraordinary biodiversity values.

Following a decade of consultation, planning and cooperation between the Tanzania Forest Services Agency, the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group, local government, communities, the Udzungwa Forest Project (UFP) and the Kilombero Sugar Company, the forest was formally declared as a Nature Forest Reserve on 11th January 2019.

“This is a major achievement for forest conservation that will help both wildlife and people, in a way that differs from any other reserve that I know,” stated Charles Meshack, Executive Director of the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group.

The conservation value of Magombera Forest first became known in the 1970s, and received international news attention through the scientific discovery of a new chameleon species in 2009, the Magombera chameleon, *Kinyongia magomberae*. Unusually, the first individual of this chameleon to be discovered, was extracted from the jaws of a snake. The Magombera Nature Forest Reserve is also home to populations of the Endangered Udzungwa red colobus monkey, Verdcourt’s Polyalthia tree and the large-leaved Memecylon tree. In addition, the Endangered Luke’s Cynometra tree occurs mainly in riparian gallery forests now protected in the new nature reserve. Numerous

other internationally threatened species of plants and animals are present in the new reserve, including the Udzungwa dwarf galago, African elephants, and hippopotamus.

Magombera Forest is also a vitally important place for local communities who depend on the adjacent land for rice and sugar farming. The forest provides invaluable ecological services including protection from floods and soil erosion.

The protection of the forest has been made possible following major donations by the World Land Trust, Rainforest Trust and Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation, kick-started by a new donation from Flamingo Land. Additional funds from the Rainforest Trust will now be used by TFCG and UFP to develop and implement a conservation and tourism plan for the new reserve.

The Magombera Nature Reserve, will initially be managed by the Udzungwa Forest Project and the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group in collaboration with the Tanzania Forest Services Agency and the four villages adjacent to the reserve. Due to decades of human presence without harm to the monkeys, tourists visiting Magombera Nature Reserve will have a unique opportunity for close encounters with colobus monkeys, after just a short walk through flat, shaded, beautiful forest.

Anyone wishing to help the wildlife and people of Magombera can do so by visiting the new Nature Reserve.

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Participating Organisations

Tanzania Forest Conservation Group is the largest national, environmental, non-governmental organisation in Tanzania. For 34 years, the mission of TFCG has been to conserve and restore the biodiversity of globally important forests in Tanzania for the benefit of the present and future generations. TFCG achieves this through capacity building, advocacy, research, community development and protected area management, in ways that are sustainable and foster participation, co-operation and partnership. www.tfcg.org.

Udzungwa Forest Project is a conservation project based in southern Tanzania. The aim of the project is to better protect tropical forests through ecological monitoring, community education, capacity building and lobbying. UFP was established and is led by **Flamingo Land**, operating under the **Tanzania Forest Conservation Group** and **Reforest Africa**. UFP works in partnership with the University of York, local villages and the Tanzania Forest Service. www.reforestafrica.com/projects.

Tanzania Forest Services Agency is a government agency within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania. The mission of TFS is to

sustainably manage the national forest and bee resources in order to contribute to the social, economic, ecological and cultural needs of present and future generations. The Tanzania Government through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism has worked closely with the consortium to ensure the protection of the Magombera Forest www.tfs.go.tz.

Rainforest Trust, USA is a leading international conservation organization that has been steadfast in its mission for 30 years to save endangered species through the purchase and protection of imperilled tropical habitats in partnership with local partners and communities. Since its founding in 1988, Rainforest Trust has helped protect over 18 million acres of rainforest and other tropical habitats in more than 125 project sites around the world. Presently, Rainforest Trust is working to establish a network of over 190 protected areas toward its goal of strategically protecting 50 million acres by 2020. Rainforest Trust has a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, and 100 percent of project gifts directly fund vital conservation action. www.RainforestTrust.org.

World Land Trust, UK is an international conservation charity that protects the world's most biologically significant and threatened habitats acre by acre. Through a network of partner organisations around the world, WLT funds the creation of reserves and provides permanent protection for habitats and wildlife. Partnerships are developed with established and highly respected local organisations who engage support and commitment among the local community. www.worldlandtrust.org.

Flamingo Land Theme Park and Zoo is one of the UK's most visited tourist attractions, with 1.7 million annual visitors. The company has a long-term commitment to wildlife conservation and has donated over \$700,000 to its work in Magombera Forest. Its research and conservation collaboration with the **University of York** has received six awards. www.flamingoland.co.uk.

University of York, UK is one of the world's leading universities and a member of the elite Russell Group of universities in the United Kingdom. The university is a dynamic, research-intensive university committed to the development of life-saving discoveries and new technologies to tackle some of the most pressing global challenges. www.york.ac.uk.

Aage V. Jensen Charity Foundation operates all over the world via ownership as well as support of research and nature projects. The objective of the Foundation is to contribute to the preservation of nature in all its diversity. Through the acquisition of conservation areas, and through participation in projects. www.avjf.dk.